

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**  
June 24, 2020

Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We write to follow up on our letter dated May 8, 2020 raising grave concerns about your response to the COVID-19 epidemic in Florida. In the 46 days since that letter, you have chosen to make excuses for the warning signs of resurgent COVID-19 outbreaks rather than confront the reality that the new coronavirus is spreading in Florida communities and continues to put the health, financial security, and lives of our constituents at risk.

In May, the state reported more than 1,000 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 on only three days. In the first two weeks of June, the state reported over 1,000 cases every day except for the first day of the month. Last week, Florida broke its record for new cases multiple times. The seven-day average is now 3,389 new cases.

As cases have increased, you have attempted to make excuses for this grim trend rather than taking action to turn it around and save lives. You have defended your position by focusing heavily on the positivity rate of new cases and the increase in testing. But as cases have spiked this week, so has the positivity rate. Six out of the last seven days have had a rate above 10 percent. The World Health Organization recommends a positivity rate under five percent for 14 days before governments consider additional reopening. Yet, in response to rising cases and rising positivity you have said that you will not even consider rolling back plans to fully reopen.

We want our economy to strengthen, and we believe that public health should lead the response to ensure progress. As you said in your April 29, 2020 address, "If we're making progress, we need to continue to put people back to work in a safe, smart and step-by-step way but it's going to be data driven." If we ignore the data, businesses will be forced to close not because of a government order, but to keep their customers and staff safe, as we are already seeing in some areas of the state. Too many people do not fully understand why reopening does not mean it is safe to return to their normal lives. Rather than providing clarity and helping Floridians understand what we all must do to keep one another safe and repair our economy, our response has fallen into needless political battles. Unfortunately, even something as simple and effective as wearing a mask has now become politicized.

Florida fared better than many other states early in the pandemic, but we must rise to meet the moment we are in better than you have prepared us for. Instead of charting a course for Florida

to suppress rebound outbreaks through a comprehensive plan for testing, contact tracing, and isolation, you have criticized the media for raising concerns about transparency, blamed “overwhelmingly Hispanic” farmworkers for new cases in agricultural communities, blamed increasing spikes on young people who continue to interact with family and friends who are at greater risk, and even blamed unemployed Floridians and your predecessor for the failures of your Department of Economic Opportunity to help ease the economic toll of business closures. Your efforts must be refocused on preparing the state for potential increases in hospitalizations and doing everything we can to save lives.

As members of the U.S. House of Representatives, we want to be your partner in responding to this crisis. Many of us are your former colleagues, and we know that you understand the importance of federal and state coordination. But our requests for regular briefings from you and other state officials have gone unanswered. Today we ask that you convene your first meeting with Florida’s congressional delegation since the start of this crisis with the hope of establishing regular communication as we continue to respond.

In March, we passed the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which included \$8.3 billion to Florida through the Coronavirus Relief Fund. In addition to direct response funding, the federal government has provided more than \$63.5 billion in total aid, including \$11.3 billion for medical care and testing and \$52.1 billion in economic relief. With cases increasing dramatically in our state, we are certain that more relief will be necessary, and we hope to work closely with you to ensure that our communities have the resources they need to care for COVID-19 patients, prevent outbreaks, and ease the economic toll on businesses and families.

At this critical moment, we continue to offer our full support as you work to protect the health and economic wellbeing of all Floridians. We look forward to your first meeting with Florida’s congressional delegation, and we urge you to call on us if we may be of assistance to you as we continue to develop legislation, exercise oversight of the federal response, and support all of the people of Florida through this crisis.

Sincerely,



Ted Deutch  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



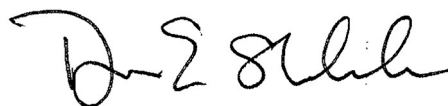
Alcee L. Hastings  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



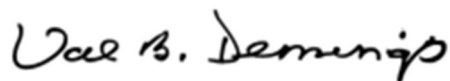
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